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THE DISTRIBUTION OF SOME FALCONS AND PLOVERS IN EAST AFRICA

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While preparing maps and species' accounts for the falcons (Falconidae) and plovers (Charadriidae) in the forthcoming *Atlas of speciation in African Non-Passerine birds*, I discovered a number of records which amplify or clarify their distribution in East Africa as contained in such standard works as White (1965) and Williams (1967, 1969). I hope that publication of the more interesting of these will prompt East African ornithologists to document any unpublished sight records which add further to the pictures presented. As Forbes-Watson (1971) is not available in Zambia, my nomenclature follows White (1965).

POLIHIERAX SEMITORQUATUS Pygmy Falcon

White (1965) records this species in Tanzania to as far south as the (Central) railway line. To be more exact, in the west it occurs south to Mwanza (Bowen 1931) and Wembere Steppe (Reynolds 1968), and further east to 230 km south of Mt Kilimanjaro (Fuggles-Couchman & Elliott 1946) and Mkomasi (specimen in the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, England examined by me). Much further south there are two sight records which may well be correct, but which require substantiation. In the south-west there is a single record from the eastern escarpment of Lake Rukwa (Vesey-Fitzgerald & Beesley 1960), and in the far south the species is reported from Chidya, Masasi by Tweedy (1966). Both localities are well outside the normal range of the usual host of this falcon, the White-headed Buffalo Weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli* (Map 372 in Hall & Moreau 1970).

FALCO FASCIINUCHA Taita Falcon

Mann (1976) records this falcon from a few localities in Kenya, including Lokitaung in north Turkana and Amboseli; fuller details of these records are of interest, and have been supplied by the observer, J.G. Williams (*in litt.*). He found at least two pairs resident in a 10 km line of high larva cliffs, to the west of the track from Lokitaung northwards to Liwan and Lokomarinyang in Ilemi Triangle on the Sudan border. These birds preyed on Red-billed Queleas *Quelea quelea* which nested in large colonies in nearby *Acacia mellifera* bush. In addition, Williams reports twice seeing adult Taita Falcons near the Ol Turkai swamp in Amboseli; these would presumably be wanderers from Mt Kilimanjaro, where they may be resident. Mann (1976) also mentions, without details, the occurrence of this species at Malindi. The late Capt. C.R.S. Pitman (*in litt.*) considered that he saw Taita Falcons on the Kenya coast at both Malindi and Diani Beach near Mombasa. In view of his considerable experience of the species most likely to be confused, the African Hobby *F. cuvieri*, one cannot dismiss these records out of hand, but there are no suitable cliffs in these

areas and I have no suggestion of such wanderings in Zambia, where the Taita Falcon is best known.

There are two Kenya specimens, the type from Taita and one in the Meinertzhagen collection (now in the British Museum) from Voi (D.W. Snow *in litt.*). It should be stressed that the captive juvenile reported from Nairobi by Spinage (1957) was, in fact, a Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* (J.G. Williams *in litt.*) and the specimen is in the National Museum.

An acceptable sight record not mentioned by Mann (1976) is of an adult seen near Samburu Lodge on 15 August 1965 by D.A. and M. Zimmerman (pers. comm.). When I visited that area in 1976 I noticed hills that might provide suitable nesting sites, based on my experience in Zambia. The only other recent sight records known to me are those of Lack (1976) from the Taita Hills and near Voi. These three records are submitted tentatively, but they may all be correct.

In Tanzania, the Crater Highlands record quoted by Mann (1976) from Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1957) is a sighting from Olosirwa Mt (Elliott & Fuggles-Couchman 1948). In addition to J.S.S. Beesley's sight record from the east side of Kilimanjaro, quoted by Mann, the species has been seen there by Sir Hugh Elliott (*in litt.*).

There is no published record from Uganda, but the late Capt. Pitman (*in litt.*) reported seeing what "might have been" a Taita Falcon at Bukakata, on the north-west shore of Lake Victoria. As with the Kenya coastal records, this observation may be correct, but clearly requires confirmation.

[Other Kenya records are in the 'Short communications' section of this issue, they could not be made known to R.J. Dowsett in time. Ed.]

FALCO CONCOLOR Sooty Falcon

The distribution of this migrant species, away from its breeding areas, has been well described by Moreau (1969). In addition to the Tanzanian records quoted by him, there is an undated specimen from Tanga (Benson 1967: 93). Moreau made no mention of a claimed breeding record from Tanzania that is quite without supporting details, and probably without merit. Thomas (1962) reported a pair nesting in Kibondo District during August 1960, but this is inherently unlikely.

The Kenya records documented by Moreau (1969) include a specimen from Nairobi dated 21 January. Lest it should be thought that this denotes a bird wintering so far north, it should be stressed that this is the specimen, now in the National Museum, previously claimed by Spinage (1957) to be a Taita Falcon. When captured it showed obvious signs of already having been in captivity (J.G. Williams *in litt.*), and so both date and locality may be doubted.

FALCO ARDOSIACEUS Grey Kestrel

Mann (1976) records this species only from the Western and Nyanza Provinces in Kenya. In addition to his references, there is a specimen from south-east of Mt Elgon in the California Academy of Sciences, which I have examined. More interesting, there is a specimen labelled "Tana River, Embere" (i.e. in the Nyeri area), collected by V.G.L. van Someren and now in the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium (M. Louette *in litt.*).

FALCO DICKINSONI Dickinson's Grey Kestrel

White (1965) records this species north in Tanzania to Kilosa and Pemba in the east. There is a specimen in the National Museum, Nairobi, from Magunga in western Tanzania.

FALCO RUPICOLLOIDES Greater Kestrel

The only published record from Tanzania is apparently from the north-east, at Kitumbeine, south-east of Lake Natron (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1957). In addition there is a specimen from as far south as Dodoma, collected by van Someren and now at Tervuren (M. Louette *in litt.*). It is dated 6 December and may be a non-breeding wanderer, as has been noted in parts of Zambia (Benson *et al.* 1971).

FALCO ALOPEX Fox Kestrel

Mann (1976) details the first Kenyan records. For Turkana he mentions "extreme north" - J.G. Williams (*in litt.*) specifies north of Lokitaung in the Ilemi Triangle, where he found many pairs nesting. There is a specimen in the National Museum, Nairobi, from the Mogilla range in the north-west Kenya/Sudan border area. Mention must also be made of two specimens from much further south in Kenya, namely the Rift Valley 50 km west of Nairobi and Lake Naivasha. The first is in the Peabody Museum, Yale University, U.S.A. (C.G. Sibley *in litt.*), the second in the National Museum, Nairobi.

For Uganda, Mann (1976) can quote sight records from only two localities, both in Karamoja. There is a skeletal specimen from Debasian, Karamoja, in the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada, collected by G. Hyslop on 27 March 1970 (R.D. James *in litt.*). In addition, Elliott (1972) apparently saw several in Kidepo National Park while D.J. Pearson (pers. comm.) saw two at Kaabong (nearby) on 19 June 1966.

VANELLUS ARMATUS Blacksmith Plover

Elliott (1972) records this species, without comment, from Kidepo National Park in northern Uganda. He makes no mention of the Spur-winged Plover *V. spinosus* which would seem much more likely to occur there. I know of no acceptable record from Uganda; the nearest is apparently a specimen from 15 miles (24 km) south of Maralal, Kenya (Los Angeles County Museum).

VANELLUS SPINOSUS Spur-winged Plover

The most southerly acceptable record from Tanzania is apparently a specimen from Morogoro (Friedmann 1930). The species has been reported from the Rukwa Valley by Vesey-Fitzgerald & Beesley (1960), but it is not clear what evidence there is for this.

VANELLUS MELANOPTERUS Black-winged Plover

This species breeds at a relatively high altitude, and there is a striking gap in its distribution, between northern Tanzania and South Africa. Nou in Mbulu District (specimen in the National Museum, Nairobi) appears to be the most southerly locality in Tanzania. However, there is a sight record from Njombe in the southern highlands (Haldane 1956), which may in time prove to be correct. It is difficult to explain the absence from suitable areas in southern Tanzania and northern Malawi. As mentioned by Vesey-Fitzgerald & Beesley (1960), sight records from the low-lying Rukwa Valley are surely the result of confusion with *V. lugubris*.

VANELLUS SENEGALLUS Senegal Wattled Plover

Mann (1976) could trace no records from Tanzania, but Reynolds (1977) has drawn attention to his own earlier published observations as has Beesley (1977). The species has also been recorded from Wanging'ombe Dam near Njombe (Haldane 1956) and Bussissi (Mwanza), Magango and Karagwe, west of Bukoba (Reichenow, quoted by Friedmann 1930). I have examined specimens from the Ufipa Plateau (National Museum, Nairobi and Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles, Bruxelles, Belgium), Buchosa in Mwanza District and Kasulu in Kigoma District (both in Nairobi). There is also a specimen from Kafakola in the Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn, Germany (H.E. Wolters *in litt.*).

VANELLUS SUPERCILIOSUS Brown-chested Wattled Plover

Schmidl (1977) reports 'juveniles' from Kendu Bay near Kisumu on 10 September, and it might be thought from this that the species breeds in Kenya. Further evidence might be sought from van Someren (1935) who says "I have obtained examples in the south Kavirondo area in which district it breeds ... My only evidence that it breeds in the south Kavirondo district is that three-quarter grown young, in first feather, were seen with their parents on the Kano flats [i.e. near Kisumu]. They were of such an age that they could not possibly have migrated there". However, Chapin (1939: 78) examined a "juvenile" collected by van Someren on 22 August, and confirmed that it was in fact several months old. The breeding of this species in Nigeria in December-June (egg-laying in January and February) is documented by Serle (1956), and passage across north-eastern Zaïre has been described by Chapin (*loc. cit.*). As far as I know, all East African records are between July and November. I think it unlikely that this intra-African migrant breeds at each end of its migration, although this is a possibility with some species of waterfowl, notably Fulvous Tree Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* and Knob-billed Goose *Sarkidiornis melanota*, known from ringing in Zambia and Rhodesia to have a trans-equatorial migration coinciding with suitable breeding conditions in both northern and southern hemispheres (Dowsett MS). Incidentally, it would seem that the plains of Lake Victoria around Kisumu are likely to be visited regularly by the Brown-chested Wattled Plover in the non-breeding season.

CHARADRIUS PALLIDUS Chestnut-banded Sand Plover

Mann (1976) quotes, without comment, range extensions to Lakes Nakuru (breeding and Baringo in Kenya, from the nearest resident population on alkaline Lake Magadi. It is most surprising that these are the only such records from these well-known areas, and I would doubt - on the evidence available - that there are resident populations. It must also be remembered that richly coloured Kittlitz's Sand Plovers *C. pecuarius* have on occasion elsewhere in Africa been confused with the Chestnut-banded, which may, nevertheless, wander on occasion, as is apparently the case in south-western Rhodesia and Botswana (Dowsett MS). I hope that observers resident in Kenya will document the status of this species in detail.

Mann reports, as the only record from Uganda, a bird seen at Katwe Salt Lake in Ruwenzori (Queen Elizabeth) National Park by Pitman (Chapin 1954: 629). This might well be a suitable alkaline lake for this species, but there have been no other records since 1948. As this would be a considerable extension of the known range of the species, and in view of the possible confusion with Kittlitz's Sand Plover, I would prefer to retain this record in square brackets pending further observations.

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SOME RECENT RECORDS OF PALAEARCTIC BIRDS

IN KENYA AND TANZANIA ¹

The first part of this article was published in *Scopus* 1: 39-43. As mentioned in the first part, only records to June 1976 are included here, later records will be published in the sub-committee's Bird Report due out in early 1978.

LARUS RIDIBUNDUS Black-headed Gull
Backhurst *et al.* (1973) give only six records of this species, all from Kenya. Since the invasion of these gulls in 1971/72 it has been regularly recorded from Kenya and coastal Tanzania in some numbers. An account of this change of status is at present in preparation for *Scopus*.

CUCULUS POLIOCEPHALUS Lesser Cuckoo
A few, Sokoke-Gedi, 7 Apr 72 (DAT); 1 Sokoke, 16 Apr 76 (DJP) and 5 there, 25 Apr 76 (JS).

OTUS SCOPS European Scops Owl
Two Palaeartic birds ringed, Naivasha, 23 Feb 75: 110 g, 169 mm wing and 95 g, 156 mm wing (GCB, WPHD, CFM).

CAPRIMULGUS EUROPEAUS European Nightjar
Lake Manyara, 1, 31 Oct 69 (DAT); 1, Dandora 12 Mar 70 (BSM); 1 ringed, Lake Nakuru 31 Oct 70 (DJP, GCB); 1, Lake Naivasha 27 Feb 73 (DAT).
Ngulia Lodge: 14 ringed (caught at night) 12-19 Nov 74. Birds of both the nominate race and the eastern *umwini* were involved. In 1975 only two were ringed, on 27 Nov (DJP, GCB).

LANIUS SENATOR Woodchat Shrike
1, Samburu, 23 Feb 70 (DAT); 1, Bungoma, 28 Jan - 4 Feb 73 (HB).

ANTHUS CAMPESTRIS Tawny Pipit
1 near Garissa, 11 Nov 74 (DAT).

ACROCEPHALUS GRISELDIS Basra Reed Warbler
At Ngulia Lodge, 1971: singles caught 28 Nov, 7 Dec and 12 Dec.
1972/73: recorded most days, 28 Nov - 13 Dec, 36 ringed.
1973/74: most days 24 Nov - 20 Dec, and again 31 Dec; 23 ringed.
1974/75: recorded 27 Oct, then most days 13 Nov - 22 Dec; 54 ringed.
1975/76: most days 27 Nov - 15 Dec; 34 ringed. (GCB, DJP).
Other records: 1 ringed Athi R., 19 Nov 71; singles seen at two localities near Mtito Andei, 13 Feb 73; 1 ringed Watamu, 11 Apr 76 (DJP). One seen Voi, 9 Dec 75, and another ringed there Apr 76 (PL).

¹ Compiled by members of the E.A.N.H.S. Ornithological sub-committee